University of Massachusetts Amherst

University Relations and Advancement Council

October 5, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: **P. Baillargeon (Chair), L. Bruce, J. Clark, C. Dunn, S. Fitzgerald, J. Kennedy, T. Paik, O. Parkash Dhankher, G. Weaver,**

Apologies: **D. Biancamano, R.-E. Verock**

1. Meeting called to order at 4:03 p.m.
2. **John Kennedy**, Vice Chancellor for University Relations, introduces the member of his team in attendance at the meeting. John Kennedy offers an overview of the various responsibilities of the University Relations activities for the newcomers to the Council.

3. **Chris Dunn,** Executive Director of Government Relations and Special Advisor to the Chancellor, addressed the expedited process surrounding the one-year contract extension. The process was completed much quicker than normal. A supplemental budget was passed during the summer including language and money for some of the contract that was already negotiated, but certain state officials were not comfortable paying costs of 2024 with the budget of 2023. So, the legislature agreed to use the 2023 budget to cover for the 2024 budget by amending it. He is confident that once that the new bill will include language covering all 24 negotiated contracts. This is supposed to be done by October 15, this date is very likely not to be observed. People should expect to see the retroactive pay on their paychecks at some point before the holidays (retroactive 4% increase dating from July 1st, and an additional 4% increase on January 1st, 2024.)

- Other highlights of the 2024 budget: The budget allocates $524 million for education, and $229 million specifically for higher education that will help make community college and a four-year degree more accessible through the MassReconnect program and financial aid expansions.

- UMass did get a 3% reinvestment in the universities' Line Item. It represents a 2% raise to the budget projections. Each percentage point represents about $6 million of which 47% goes to campus. So about 25% of every dollar the State invested in public higher education is a direct investment in UMass Amherst. This does not include student financial aid. All of UMass Amherst's government relations efforts lead up to that budget.

- With the millionaires' tax, $75 million was allocated in new financial aid only eligible for public institutions. We are awaiting guidance about how to roll these funds out.

- $50 million out of the millionaires' tax will go to a fund that helps deferred maintenance on the campuses. This is not nearly enough, but a good sign that this is something that has garnered traction under the Healy administration.
- There is an endowment match provision in the budget. The State matches 2 to one public investment into our endowment. This has been very popular with our donors. It is $10 million for community colleges and state universities to split. UMass Amherst reached the $5 million very quickly where Community Colleges struggle to reach that number.
- There used to be 3-month waiting period for health insurance benefits to quick in when hired. The new law makes health insurance start the first of the month following hiring. So, the longest one would have to wait to get benefits is now 30 days. That is the minimum operating time that the GIC requires to get the benefits going. This is key for new hires, faculty, and staff, and represents a useful recruitment tool. This new rule is taking effect on July 1st, 2024.

4. **John Kennedy**, Vice Chancellor for University Relations, presents the Chancellor's request to create an informal economic development task force for Western Massachusetts. The economic development model has been working under a decentralized model so far. The goal is through outreach, engagement and with the help of incentives put in place by the Biden administration to create partnerships with communities of Western Massachusetts for University to play a more important role in the economic development of the region.

- The Chancellor is interested in the housing challenges faced by the community at-large and shared by our faculty and staff. He is also interested in maximizing the use of the Springfield Center, mainly to align its use with the needs of the Springfield community.
- The Springfield Center opened roughly a decade ago and was at first a UMass system asset, it has since then been reassigned to University Relations. The goal is to expend the use of the Springfield Center by hiring somebody involved in community affairs and engagement. This individual should have deep roots in the community.
- University Relations has been working with Maureen Perry-Jenkins, Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, who has been the lead faculty member in Springfield.
- The Biden administration has been pushing to develop Research involving community engagement. The incentives put in place by the US administration could be a good opportunity to bring new funds in the Springfield community with the help of faculty lead research initiatives. Chancellor is very interested in these types of initiatives; it is perceived by University Relations as an unofficial mandate of the Chancellor's new administration.
- The Chancellor has recently been at the White House to discuss diversity in recruitment of students in the post-Affirmative Action environment. The Chancellor was invited to the White House with the leaders of UCLA, and Princeton University. The Springfield Center could play a key role in the recruitment of a diverse student body from the local communities.

5. **Chris Dunn,** Executive Director of Government Relations and Special Advisor to the Chancellor, gives a report on the recent visit of Chancellor Reyes in Washington DC where he met all the federal Massachusetts delegation. The Chancellor was extremely as ease with these interactions, operating a very smooth transition from Chancellor Subbaswamy's administration. The Chancellor already has a very strong social media presence, which makes it easier for University Relations, and contributes positively to establish contact with the student body.
6. Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.